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- (1) Nomo the savior of the Major Leagues: US Ambassador Schieffer, ex-Texas Rangers president

SHUKAN ASAHI (Page 156-157) (Full)
April 14, 2006

By Shannon Higgins

On March 15, two days after the 'questionable call' in a recent US-hosted World Baseball Classic (WBC) game between Team Japan and Team USA, another Japan-vs.-USA ballgame was played at Tokyo Dome. It was a charity event in the name of bilateral friendship between the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's rookies and the American Embassy. The game ended in a 15-15 tie. This time around, however, it doesn't matter much...

My target was US Ambassador to Japan J. Thomas Schieffer, 58, manager of the US Embassy team. This is my interview with the ambassador, who was in the dugout to coach his team during the interview.

-- I know this game is to promote friendship. Even so, they're playing baseball at Tokyo Dome. That's great.

Schieffer: "We normally make efforts to communicate with Diet members. But there were so many newcomers elected in last year's general election. I invited them to a luncheon at the embassy, and in that meeting, we enjoyed talking about baseball after a while. I said, 'Then why don't we play a ballgame?' Anyway, baseball is the greatest sport in the world, and it's the best way to promote friendship. Well, probably because the embassy staff made too much of a to-do about it, they decided to hold this event at Tokyo Dome. But everyone looks happy, so they made the right decision. All we have to do now is hire American umpires, and then we can win handily." (Laughs)

In fact, Ambassador Schieffer is one of the world's most prominent baseball nuts. In 1989, Schieffer bought the Texas

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Rangers, a Major League Baseball (MLB) team, with US President George W. Bush, a friend of his from the oil industry. Schieffer was a co-owner of the Rangers and manned its front office as president for about 10 years, and he led the team's golden age.

Schieffer: "I had some very memorable days. I had the best time of my life during that decade. I was in charge of building Arlington Stadium. (Schieffer reportedly invested a total of 1.4 million dollars in the ballpark project.) The ballpark was completed in 1994. Shortly thereafter, however, MLB players went on strike. I was shocked. The strike dealt an economic blow to me. But I, as a baseball lover, didn't know what to say, and I felt sad, like someone who had been jilted by a lover. . . . But in 1995, when play resumed, the savior showed up. It was Hideo Nomo. He was doing well over there. Nomo made the news something other than the strike. American baseball fans could again realize how great baseball is, I believe. Actually, Nomo pitched in the All-Star Game that year. That game was played in Arlington Stadium. I was moved. I thought there were still many great ballplayers in the world."

-- Nomo went over to the States, where he paved the way for Japanese ballplayers to play in the Major Leagues. Now, are there any other Japanese ballplayers who have caught your eye?

Schieffer: "Well, I'm also a baseball fan. Perhaps, all the teams want (Hideki) Matsui and Ichiro (Suzuki). If I were the owner of a team, I would do all I could to get them. But there are many other gifted ballplayers in Japan. I will withhold their names, though. (Laughs). Yeah, since I came to Japan, I've actually taken every opportunity to watch Japanese professional ballgames. It's interesting. I want them to go over to the Major Leagues. They would evolve as they play hard against the best ballplayers in the world. In the long run, that would lead to baseball's further development."

Japanese ballplayers at a high level

-- What are the characteristics of Japanese players in your eyes?

Schieffer: "Their fundamentals are solid, and they have a high

level of skill. Before today's game, I saw skills training for a baseball team of local boys. They were all good at holding the bat, and their swing was also good. We're now playing the game here with those young lawmakers today, and they're also good. Probably, they were blessed with good coaches when they were small. Well, generally speaking, Japanese ballplayers are not so big. Even so, they have power and speed, because they're good at using their body. But the most impressive thing to me is that Japanese ballplayers know how to create a big inning for their team by stringing together hits. That shows how smart they are. I'll say it again, their baseball is at a high level."

-- Late last year, you talked with Mr. Shigeo Nagashima-who is well known as "Mister"-at your own earnest wish. Let me go back a little. You have such a love of baseball, but you sold the Rangers in 1998. What made you do so?

Schieffer: "Well, when it comes to why I sold that ball club, that's based on my judgment purely as an investor. It was about time to sell. That's why. After that, until 1999, I remained as the ball club's president. But later, the time came for me to undertake a new business challenge and to go on to the next

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stage. I thought to myself that it was a chance to do so, and I resigned as the team's president."

-- You later worked as a business consultant. In 2001, President Bush, who just came into office, appointed you to the post of ambassador to Australia.

Schieffer: "Yeah. I was also surprised. But it was a good chance for me to serve my country, so I was pleased to accept the offer."

-- And last year, you became ambassador to Japan. At first, when you arrived at your post here, some people felt uneasy about you. They said you were not an expert on Japan in particular, and they also said that you're a friend of President Bush. In addition, they said you're less experienced in the area of diplomacy and that you came from the private sector.

Schieffer: "Well, few people knew about me, so they probably felt somewhat uneasy. But I'm not alien to the world of politics. I majored in political science in college and international relations in a postgraduate course. When I was younger, I ran from the Democratic Party and served as a Texas State representative for three terms. I also worked as a lawyer. So I'm not a layman when it comes to negotiations. (Laughs) Of course, I have no experience or career in Washington, but I've so far been tied to American politics in various ways."

-- By the way, your brother is Mr. Bob Schieffer, the veteran political reporter and commentator for CBS, isn't he? But why do you think you were named for the post of envoy to Japan?

Schieffer: "The president told me, 'I want to entrust someone whom I can directly talk with and rely on.' Japan is an important partner of the United States. He probably wanted unfiltered information, I guess."

-- It's been almost one year since you became the US envoy here. Looking back over the past year, how do you feel now?

Schieffer: "It's hard to be away from my family and friends. But I'm honored to be entrusted with the post of ambassador to a country to represent the United States' interests. I'm really enjoying myself."

-- Finally, today's ballgame with the Japanese lawmakers has been a seesaw game. But what's the score in your own diplomatic arena?

Schieffer: (Laughs) "Sometimes I win, sometimes I lose. (Laughs) Well, I'll continue to do my best and will continue to work to develop our two countries' bilateral relationship."

On March 16, the day after this interview, the ambassador was in Niigata with Megumi Yokota's parents. This was also something he wanted to do after becoming ambassador. He was there to visit and see the place where she was abducted.

(2) US force realignment following a wild path (Part 4): Friction evident between uniformed and non-uniformed personnel in Defense Agency

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 28) (Abridged)
April 5, 2006

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On September 2, 2005, a data analysis building opened at the Maritime Self-Defense Force's Iwakuni base in Yamaguchi Prefecture. The four-story building to house a data analysis unit cost the government 600 million yen.

The data analysis unit flies EP3 electronic-warfare aircraft and OP3 observation planes over the East China Sea and other areas to collect secret data, including electronic intelligence of China and North Korea. The data analysis system installed in the new building also went into full operation Sept. 2.

Two months later, on October 29, the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee (2 plus 2) produced an interim report on the realignment of US forces in Japan. It was also decided to transfer the data analysis unit to the Atsugi base in Kanagawa Prefecture. A senior Defense Agency official commented on the data analysis building: "It will cost money to demolish the building. The Defense Agency will probably ask the US military if they want to use it."

Moving to Atsugi are 17 planes and 2,000 MSDF personnel and their families. Their transfer would deal a blow to the economy of Iwakuni. In its March 12 plebiscite, Iwakuni rejected accepting carrier-borne jets now in Atsugi. Iwakuni also urged the Defense Agency to call off its plan to move the MSDF's analysis unit to Atsugi.

Last December, a heated debate took place between "non-uniformed" internal bureaus and the "uniformed" Ground Staff Office over a central rapid response group.

The GSDF had planned to construct a new building at Camp Asaka straddling Tokyo and Saitama for the rapid response group to be launched in March 2007 for the purpose of dealing with domestic and foreign disasters and international activities. But the interim report specified its transfer to Camp Zama along with the US Army 1st Corps.

But a decision was eventually made to launch the rapid response group at Camp Asaka, as originally planned. Construction work will begin soon to build the group's headquarters at a cost of 750 million yen. A senior Defense Agency official explained that once the group was transferred to Zama, the building at Camp Asaka would be used for other purposes. But a GSDF officer took this view: "Local residents are opposed to the relocation of the 1st Corps, and we don't know when the rapid response group can move to Camp Zama."

Some plans have been called off, although they had been included in the interim report. One of them was a plan to establish an infantry regiment at the US Army's Sagami Depot in Kanagawa. The plan vanished with the Ground Staff Office's statement, "We have no plan to set up a regiment in Kanagawa."

Meanwhile, the Air Self-Defense Force has reportedly reaped benefits from the planned US force realignment. The interim report specified plans to relocate the ASDF Air Defense Command to Yokota Air Base and the joint use of Kadena Air Base, the ASDF's long-cherished dream.

To the ASDF's surprise, however, the interim report also specified the Nyutabaru base in Miyazaki and Tsuiki base in

Fukuoka as emergency airports for Futenma Air Station in Okinawa. An ASDF officer cast doubt about the emergency airport plan, saying: "The Tsuiki and Nyutabaru bases are small. In order to build US facilities there, we will have to buy up land, and that might meet stiff resistance from local residents."

A decision was also made to split fighter training at Kadena Air Base among five ASDF bases. Okinawa residents, who have been suffering from aircraft noise, are hopeful that the step will help reduce the burden on their prefecture. But a senior ASDF officer predicted: "The purpose is to increase interoperability between Japan and the US. Given the slashed training budget, the US military may not be able to transfer its training, as Okinawa expects."

What caused this type of confusion? An SDF official complained: "For fear of leakage of talks with the US, internal bureaus did not consult with uniformed personnel. Non-uniformed officials, who don't know anything about troop operations, made the decisions."

A Defense Agency official described the US force realignment as a once-in-a-century major reform comparable to a revision of the US-Japan Security Treaty. Although he also underscored closer military cooperation between Japan and the US, discord in the SDF is now obvious.

(3) US force realignment following a wild path (Part 5 - Conclusion): X-band radar in Japan may end up serving as "endorsement" of preemptive strike

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 26) (Abridged)
April 6, 2006

On December 7, 2005, a group of US Defense Department officials and technical experts toured the Air Self-Defense Force's Shariki detachment base in Aomori Prefecture.

Their purpose was to determine a location for X-band radar, an integral part of the ballistic missile defense (MD) system. They concluded their 11 days of research by picking a spot on the base facing the Sea of Japan.

Missile defense is an intricate system to intercept an incoming ballistic missile with another missile. The United States began deploying MD in 2004 for homeland defense. The deployment of an X-band radar installation in Japan is specified in the US force realignment interim report produced by Tokyo and Washington last October.

The US is on alert against North Korean and Iran. North Korea fired a Taepodong ballistic missile into the Pacific Ocean off Misawa in August 1998. Some parts in the missile reportedly flew 5,000 kilometers. Beyond that point lies Hawaii, where the US Pacific Command is based.

A person connected with the Defense Agency said:

"The United States has only one ground-based X-band radar installation. The US has decided to deploy such a valuable component in Japan to defend itself."

Japan made a cabinet decision in December 2003 to introduce a

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missile defense system. Although the interceptor missiles are US-made, Japan has been developing radar independently.

A 30-meter-tall FPS-XX advanced radar installation has been built at the Technical Research and Development Institute Inooka branch office in Chiba Prefecture for testing.

Tanegashima lies about 1,000 kilometers away from the Inooka branch office, a distance comparable to the range of North Korea's Rodong ballistic missile.

A Self-Defense Force officer noted: "The FPS-XX radar successfully detected an H2 rocket launched from Tanegashima. The radar clearly showed the rocker's rising path. A Defense Agency official in charge neither confirmed nor denied the SDF officer's statement, which suggested the radar's readiness for full-fledged operation.

The X-band radar is highly capable of detecting warheads, although its coverage is narrow. In contrast, the FPS-XX radar has low detection capability with a wider coverage.

FPS-XX radar installations are set at four places in Japan: Shimokoshikijima in Kagoshima, Sado in Niigata, Ominato in Aomori, and Yozadake in Okinawa. Japan's radar network must be appealing to the United States.

An SDF officer familiar with missile defense proudly noted:

"There are many US satellites and American spies around the world. In terms of intelligence, the US military and Japan's SDF are as different as a grown man and a child. But with the MD system, Japan can stand on an equal footing with the US."

Japan and the US have also reached an agreement on close cooperation between the two countries' MD headquarters and sharing sensory intelligence to pave the way for containing North Korean ballistic missiles.

But military journalist Tetsuo Maeda took this view:

"The system could pose serious problems. Japan may be used often, and our country might be enmeshed in the Bush administration's preemptive strike strategy. If the US threatened North Korea with force, the North might react angrily and fire a missile as a result. In that event, it would be Japan alone that would be affected, because North Korean ballistic missiles cannot reach the continental United States. And if a Japan-US interceptor system is in place at that point, however vague it is, the MD system would give a seal of approval to the US to make a preemptive strike."

The United States is scheduled to deploy X-band radar at the ASDF's Shariki base this August and the Aegis-equipped Shiloh at Yokosuka Naval Base at the end of this year. When it comes to US force realignment, Washington's moves have been especially fast.
(4) Editorial: USFJ realignment talks making little progress

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
April 7, 2006

Talks to implement the realignment of US forces in Japan are making little progress. The interim report adopted by the

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governments of Japan and the US last October noted that a final report should be compiled by this March. Some, however, take the view that it will not be issued before late April. There is no prospect in sight for compiling a final report on USFJ realignment.

The Japanese government is now pursuing dual-track negotiations with the US. One is talks between Defense Agency (JDA) Director General Fukushima Nukaga and Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro on the relocation of Futenma Air Station to Nago. The focus of their talks is on to what extent the plan to move Futenma functions to the Camp Schwab coast as set in the interim report can be revised in response to local residents' requests.

The other is working-level talks between officials of the two countries responsible for foreign and defense affairs. Discussions are continuing on how to share the cost of relocating US Marines in Okinawa to Guam and the ratio of expenditures from

the general account (direct fiscal outlays) and the sum paid as loans in the amount borne by Japan.

Nukaga and Shimabukuro had agreed to reach a conclusion during the next round of talks to be held this week. There is concern that if a decision were reached before obtaining the consent of affected local communities, they would remain opposed to the plan, casting a pall over the future course of the realignment plan.

The bilateral working-level talks, which had been held in Washington from April 4, fell through. The next round of the talks will be held in Tokyo, starting on the 13th. The US has estimated the cost of relocating Marines to Guam at approximately 10 billion dollars. It is calling on Japan to pay 7.5 billion dollars of that amount. The two countries' views are wide apart on this issue, with the JDA basically intending to bear the cost in the form of loans through the Japan Bank for International Cooperation for family housing.

During the talks on USFJ realignment, Tokyo has strongly called for a reduction in the burden on Okinawa. The transfer of 8,000 personnel from the Marine Corps Command is the result of such efforts. The US position is that since the US will continue to take responsibility for dealing with emergencies in Japan even after the relocation, Japan should pay a large portion of the relocation costs.

If the relocation were to be carried out, based on the Marine Corps' budget and a reduced financial contribution by Japan, then the process would take longer. Numbers are the focus of discussions on the relocation of Marines to Guam and the Futenma relocation to Nago. Bargaining over numbers is nothing but a political discussion. The Nago relocation issue has to be settled first at a meeting between Nukaga and Shimabukuro so that politics can play a role in settling the cost issue as well.

(5) Editorial - Transfer of US troops in Japan: Highly costly "bill" for troop relocation

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 5) (Full)
April 7, 2006

Japan and the United States have yet to reach a final agreement on the realignment of US forces in Japan, though the end of March

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was supposed to be the deadline. On the cost of the planned relocation of US Marines from Okinawa to Guam, the US should not persist in its one-sided request to Japan.

Senior-working-level talks between Japan and the US had been held in Washington on a three-day timetable, but they ended one day early. Given the gap in views between the two countries, on such issues as the division of the cost of relocating the US Marines headquarters from Okinawa to Guam, even if consultations are soon restarted, it would take the two sides time to reach a final agreement.

The idea of transferring Marines from Okinawa to Guam was put forth in the joint paper released last October by the ministers for foreign affairs and defense of Japan and the US. The paper states that specifics of the troop relocation plan will be laid out before the end of March. This timetable was agreed on by the two governments and was a political commitment to both the peoples of Japan and the US.

Bilateral consultations on the details of the relocation plan have hardly made progress since the agreement was reached. The reason is presumably the idea that it would be easy to figure out such matters as how to share in the cost of the US troop relocation and responses by municipalities that will be affected by the US force realignment. Both the governments must take seriously their failure to come up with a final plan before the deadline.

It is an uncommon situation in that an important agreement between Japan and the US is not put into action. If this situation becomes protracted, there could be an impact on the relationship of trust between the two countries. Tokyo and Washington need to make even more effort to give shape to a final plan in a way that would be acceptable to both nations.

The US government has estimated the total cost of relocating US Marines to Guam at approximately 10 billion dollars, or about 1.2 trillion yen, and has asked Japan to pay 75% of the cost.

The transfer of US Marines to somewhere overseas will alleviate the burden on Okinawa. Marines, even after their transfer to Guam, will continue to play the role of defending Japan. Given this, it is no wonder that Japan will offer to pay a portion of the relocation cost in accordance with its ability. However, Japan's payment should be premised on a clear explanation from the US about how the money Japan will provide will be used and how Japan's share of the cost was determined.

We wonder why America's estimated relocation cost of 10 billion dollars includes expenses for the construction of social infrastructure, such as housing, roads, and water supply, in addition to the expenses for constructing base facilities. Even if Japan were to be generous enough to pay the expenses necessary for the construction of relevant facilities in accepting America's request, wouldn't the ownership of those facilities still belong to the US? Unless this simple question is resolved, the issue will become more complicated in the public eye regardless of whether the two governments reach a final agreement.

On the other hand, even in the understandable realm of cost sharing, there is room for contriving ways for cooperation. Not

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only grant aid but also government loans and private investment are possible means. Given the deep and broad relations between Japan and the US, it is advisable for both countries to be flexible and think about cooperation in other areas instead.

(6) Who is benefiting from US beef embargo?

ASAHI (Page 33) (Full)
April 7, 2006

Talks between Tokyo and Washington on a resumption of US beef imports are still continuing. Following the ban on US beef imports, a large portion of beef eaten in Japan is from Australia. An industrial source noted: "Australian beef has an image of safety. It is also cheaper than US beef."

The US is concerned that while the import ban is in place, Australian beef might dominate the Japanese market, a major importer of US beef products. Bilateral government-level beef talks were held last month at the government's joint-use conference hall, which is located next to the Australian Embassy. A senior Japanese government official who attended the talks said, "From the window we could see an Australian flag that almost looked as though it were fanning the US negotiators' frustration."

(7) Death of John Carbaugh, behind-the-scenes mastermind in Japan-US relations

ASAHI (Page 15) (Full)
April 6, 2006

Yoichi Kato, Washington bureau chief

The memorial service for John Carbaugh, attorney, 60, was held at a church in a suburb of Washington on March 29 when the cherry blossoms were at their peak. He once served as an adviser to Senator Jesse Helms. He was known for developing anticommunist political movements in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s. A few days ago, Washington Post reported in its obituary section

that Carbaugh was a leading member of the Senate's "shadow State Department."

Carbaugh began his involvement in Japan-US relations after he left Congress in 1982, setting up his office close to the White House. He had a broad range of conservative personal connections. He recently highlighted his close ties with President George W. Bush's political advisor Karl Rove.

He worked as a consultant for Japanese and US defense-related and trading companies. He was like a fixer who was involved in the process of making agreements between the two governments behind the scenes. All those involved in security in the two countries know him.

Hideaki Kato, a foreign policy commentator who is a longtime acquaintance of Carbaugh, said, "He served as a communication channel between the two countries. He conveyed the two governments' real views that two government officials could not tell each other face to face."

Washington Post columnist Robert Novak stated in a speech: "John was the best news source for me." His remark provoked laughter

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from attendees at the memorial service. Novak looked back on the past, recalling a time when, "He left a bag containing top secret Defense Department information in my office."

Novak said: "He was sure that liberal forces, including the Carter administration, would lead the country in the wrong direction. His presumption was correct."

In 1989, Carbaugh fanned discord in the US Congress when Japan and the US were at odds over Japan's plan to develop the FSX fighter aircraft. He was said to have been involved also in the 2003 withdrawal of Japanese trading firms from the Azadegan oil field project that the US government strongly opposed. He was shunned by some Japanese companies. He reportedly was also involved in the ongoing bilateral negotiations on the realignment of US force in Japan. He urged the White House and the Defense Department to accept Japan's plan to relocate the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station, backing Japan's Defense Agency.

Michael Green, Japan Affairs Director at the Center for Strategic International Studies, who served as senior advisor for Asian affairs at the White House National Security Council until at the end of last year, commented:

"We met one in a while. It was helpful to have a friend who kept a close eye on the right wing in Congress. We'd known each other since the mid-1990s. I thought he disliked Japan before meeting him, but he was friendly to Japan."

When the Cold War was over, the US enemy disappeared. US hard-line conservatives, including Carbaugh, made Japan the new "enemy" of the US as its business rival. However, Carbaugh developed a liking for Japan. Some said that he was recently considering how to strengthen Japan so that the US and Japan would be able to compete with China.

Green said, "This symbolizes a change in the US conservatives' thinking of Japan."

Carbaugh called himself the "kuromaku (behind-the-scenes mastermind), but he did not have influence affecting agreements between the two governments. He, however, seemed to have enjoyed being involved in Japan-US relations in order to move the situation in the direction he wished.

Some observers in Washington believe that since Japan-US relations have improved overall, there are fewer opportunities for a fixer like Carbaugh to play an active role. It is also true that diplomatic channels, except for the Koizumi-Bush friendship, have not functioned well. Therefore, behind-the-scene masterminds like Carbaugh are still needed.

